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Kewaunee County Ranks as One of the Healthiest Counties in Wisconsin

Princeton, N.J. and Madison, Wis. – Kewaunee County ranked 2 out of 72 counties for health outcomes and 10 for health factors, according to the seventh annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The *Rankings* are available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Kewaunee County Public Health Director Cindy Kinnard stated, “Kewaunee County has consistently ranked well over the last few years in the statewide county health rankings. Within recent years, we have seen a strong push from our communities to work together to make a positive difference in the health of our county.”

An easy-to-use snapshot that compares counties within states, the *Rankings* show that where you live influences how well and how long you live. The local level data makes it clear that good health is influenced by many factors beyond medical care including housing, education, jobs, access to healthy foods, and more. This year we took a closer look at premature deaths – or deaths that occur among people under age 75. Exploring Wisconsin’s premature death trends from 1997 to 2014, we find 39 counties have seen improvements in premature death rates, while five have seen worsening rates and the rest saw no change.

The *Rankings* Key Findings Report reveals that drug overdose deaths are fueling a dramatic increase in premature deaths nationally because of an increase in deaths among 15 to 44 year olds. From 2014 to 2015, 85 percent of the increase in premature deaths can be attributed to a swift increase in deaths among these younger populations. The *Rankings* Key Findings report reveals that while myriad issues contributed to the rise, the drug overdose epidemic is the leading cause of death among 25- to 44-year olds and is a clear driver of this trend. Drug deaths are also accelerating among 15- to 24- year olds, but nearly three times as many people in this age group die by homicide, suicide, or in motor vehicle crashes.

“The *County Health Rankings* show us that where people live plays a key role in how long and how well they live,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, RWJF president and CEO. “The *Rankings* allow local leaders to clearly see and prioritize the challenges they face — whether it’s rising premature death rates or the growing drug overdose epidemic — so they can bring community leaders and residents together to find solutions.”

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According to the 2017 *Rankings*, the five healthiest counties in Wisconsin, starting with most healthy, are Ozaukee County, followed by Kewaunee County, St. Croix County, Taylor County, and Washington County. The five counties in the poorest health, starting with least healthy, are Menominee County, Milwaukee County, Sawyer County, Adams County, and Washburn County.

This year's *Rankings* also introduce a new measure focused on young people, those 16 to 24, who are not in school or working. About 4.9 million young people in the U.S. — 1 out of 8 — fall into this category. Rates of youth disconnection are higher in rural counties (21.6 percent), particularly those in the South and West, than in urban ones (13.7 percent).

“Young adults who are not in school or working represent untapped potential in our communities and our nation that we can't afford to waste,” said Julie Willems Van Dijk, PhD, RN, director of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. “Communities addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and education can make a difference creating opportunities for all youth and young adults. The *County Health Rankings* are an important springboard for conversations on how to do just that.”

The *Rankings* have become an important tool for communities that want to improve health for all. Kewaunee County has a number of areas it will be concentrating on to improve the overall health of our county and expand health opportunities for residents, including focus areas on alcohol and drug use, nutrition and physical activity, chronic disease prevention and management, and mental health.

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working with others to build a national Culture of Health enabling everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](https://twitter.com/rwjf) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/rwjf).

About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

The [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu) advances health and well-being for all by developing and evaluating interventions and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels. The Institute works across the full spectrum of factors that contribute to health. A focal point for health and health care dialogue within the University of Wisconsin-Madison and beyond, and a convener of stakeholders, the Institute promotes an exchange of expertise between those in academia and those in the policy and practice arena. The Institute leads the work on the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* and the *RWJF Culture of Health Prize*. For more information, visit <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu>

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